



STATE OF WASHINGTON

August 16, 2007

The Honorable Brian Sonntag
State Auditor
P.O. Box 40021
Olympia, WA 98504-0021

Dear Auditor Sonntag:

Thank you for this opportunity to formally respond to the performance audit of the regulation of health professions. Like Governor Gregoire, we strongly support the use of performance audits as an important tool to improve state government, which is why we worked closely with the Auditor's staff on this audit. We appreciate the level of commitment and professionalism of both your staff and the audit contractor, Clifton Gunderson, LLC.

Patient safety is the Department of Health's (DOH) first priority in credentialing and disciplining health practitioners. We agree with many suggestions in the audit report and have started implementing them. We appreciate the Auditor's acknowledgment that DOH had begun addressing major challenges before the audit was undertaken. Specifically, the audit recognized DOH has already been working on:

- Speeding action on disciplinary cases;
- Bringing more consistency to disciplinary sanctions;
- Adopting consistent sexual misconduct rules for all professions;
- Using national databanks and State Patrol conviction records to more thoroughly check the background of health care providers;
- Increasing punishments for serious infractions;
- Expanding public access to information on sanctions against their health providers; and
- Improving the department's information systems.

We have enclosed a joint response and action plan and will report our progress on completing these action items at the Governor's upcoming Government Management Accountability and Performance forums.

The report also makes several recommendations to the Legislature to strengthen the oversight of health care professionals. We look forward to working with the Legislature as it evaluates the audit and to receive the maximum possible benefit from the work of the Auditor's staff.

Sincerely,

Mary C. Selecky, Secretary
Department of Health

Victor A. Moore, Director
Office of Financial Management

Enclosure

cc: Tom Fitzsimmons, Chief of Staff, Governor's Office
Joyce Turner, Deputy Chief of Staff, Governor's Office
Larisa Benson, Director, Government Management Accountability and Performance